

Jovis, 11^o die Februarij, 1779.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Dr. *Stinton*, for the Sermon by him preached Yesterday before this House, at *St. Margaret's, Westminster*, and that he be desired to print the same; and that the LORD NORTH, MR. CHARLES TOWNSHEND, and MR. GRAVES, do acquaint him therewith.

J. HATSELL,

Cl. Dom. Com.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT
ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,
ON
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1779:

Being the Day appointed, by His MAJESTY's Proclamation,
FOR A
G E N E R A L F A S T.

BY
GEORGE STINTON, D.D. F.R.S. and S.A. *K*
CHANCELLOR OF THE CHURCH OF LINCOLN,
AND PREBENDARY OF PETERBOROUGH.

L O N D O N :
Printed for T. PAYNE and Son, at the Mews-Gate.
Sold also by J. F. and C. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Church-yard :
J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall ; B. WHITE, in Fleet-street ; T. CADELL, in
the Strand ; and J. ROBSON, New Bond-street.

M.DCC.LXXIX.

SEERMON

Preached before the Honourable

HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT

ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,

ON

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1779:

Being the Day appointed, by the Majesty's Resolution,

FOR A

GENERAL FAST.



GEORGE STINSON, D.D. F.R.S. and S.A.
MANAGER OF THE
AND PRESS, TOWER-STR.

LONDON:

Printed for T. Payne and Son, at the Moon-Gate.
Sold also by J. B. and C. Rivington, in St. Paul's Church-yard;
J. Johnson, in Pall-mall; R. Whitt, in Fleet-street; T. Cadell, in
the Strand; and J. Rorson, New Bond-street.

MDCCLXXIX.

i Ep. P E T. ii. 17.

FEAR GOD : HONOUR THE KING.

IN these few words are contained the leading and fundamental principles, which are to regulate the conduct of men in their religious and civil capacity. To those who really wish to discharge their duty, maxims thus general and comprehensive, being easily recollected and perpetually recurring, are fitted to be of considerable use, by hindering them from deviating at all from the right path, or by calling them back to it early. Even such as are accustomed to follow no rule but present impulse, must needs be checked in their career, when the station which they ought to have kept, is thus incidentally presented to their view in a striking light; and they cannot but observe to what an alarm-

ing distance their departure from it has gradually amounted.

SUCH impressions may indeed be effaced, and an unhappy facility of effacing them is soon acquired : but still it is of some advantage to have the mind affected, though but transiently, by religious and moral motives. The evidence of fact is obtained for the existence of principles, entirely different in kind from appetite and passion. They cannot be felt at all without a consciousness of their being the superior part of our composition, and formed for authority and command. They naturally excite an apprehension, that our chief interest may depend upon allowing them their inherent claim to be the supreme guides of our conduct : since they may prove in event to be promulgations of the Divine Law within every bosom ; and it is perfectly credible, that the whole plan of the Divine administration, as it relates to moral and accountable agents, being necessarily consistent with itself, may be contrived to enforce these internal admonitions.

THE sublime and affecting views which are opened
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by such a train of thought, are too many to be distinctly enlarged on ; nor will their efficacy, it is hoped, be the less for being only suggested and hinted at. The most important circumstance is, their calling the mind home to survey its own structure, and the corresponding course of Providence ; to consider *what is man, and whereto serveth he, what is his good, and what is his evil.* (Ecclus xviii. 8.)

It cannot be enough lamented, that an enquiry so evidently beneficial, is so seldom and so superficially made. However, there are events in the lives of individuals, which almost compel every one to begin it, and lay the foundation in many for uniform virtue. It must be owned, that there are also situations peculiarly unfavourable to serious thought and reflection ; and the character of nations is observed to be affected by the same causes with that of private persons. There is indeed no necessary connection between outward circumstances, and the inward dispositions of the mind ; but the fact is, that haughtiness, sensuality, and inconsiderateness, with that brutal callousness of temper, which *neither feareth God, nor regardeth man,* are by far the

more general concomitants of prosperous than adverse fortune. It is in times of difficulty, danger, and distress, that men are most open to impressions of humility, moderation, and piety.

It would perhaps be invidious, and it is surely unnecessary, to enlarge upon the proofs which this Nation has given of the truth of the former remark. The blessings which God has bestowed upon us, have been equally conspicuous with our abuse of them. Wealth perverted to dissoluteness and insolence; liberty to licentiousness and faction; religion to infidelity and profaneness: these have been the principal features of our public character. There is nothing in it which we ourselves can review with pleasure; and we do not find it has conciliated to us the esteem of others, or the approbation of God. We have felt the consequences severely in a variety of bitter effects; and, be our future circumstances what they will, we are now loudly called upon, to *consider our ways and be wise*.

To prognosticate ill to one's country has been sometimes construed into a symptom of wishing it. It
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should certainly be far from us to do it unnecessarily, especially when some of the advantages which we enjoy, appear, as far as human foresight can extend, to be secure and permanent. Our liberty has been enlarged and improved under the gracious influences of a good Prince : our national profession of religion has hitherto remained un sullied : and both are in a likelier way to be refined and perfected, than corrupted or impaired. But our situation in other respects is full of hazard. I say nothing of our domestic feuds, because their malignity is probably concealed, under some veil or other, from the view of those who are engaged in them ; and, because this place should be sacred from topics, upon which those who wish well to the public can possibly think differently. But deep apprehensions must arise from our being engaged in the bitterest of all contests, a war with our brethren and fellow-subjects : occasioned at first by differences of opinion about the measures of submission, and the rights of supremacy ; but carried on, by our opponents, with a spirit of unusual rancour ; of late envenomed afresh by an union of arms and counsels with the ancient enemies of our name ; and not unlikely to terminate, if a merciful

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Providence

Providence does not interpose in our behalf, in a total opposition of interests, and an incurable alienation of affection. It is not my province to dwell on the dark side of the prospect, or to trace minutely the calamities that may arise from unprosperous events, or new enemies. I would only observe, that war is a solemn appeal to the justice of God; and therefore, not to be made by a sinful people, however firmly they may be persuaded of the goodness of their cause, without fear and trembling. At best, it is always attended with circumstances that are shocking to humanity; but it is also an instrument which Providence frequently employs to inflict its most exemplary vengeance upon the guilty inhabitants of the world; and therefore a just object of the greatest terror.

To consider it in this view, must surely tend to diffuse among us a general temper of penitence and devotion, and contribute much to make us fit objects of whatever mercies may yet be reserved by Heaven for a hitherto favoured people. We ascribe no efficacy to mere outward solemnities. We are sensible that no importunities can prevail upon the Almighty to protect iniquity :

iniquity : but an *effectual fervent prayer* availeth much, both in changing the heart of man, and in obtaining mercy from God. The imagination cannot paint to itself a more affecting scene, than that of a whole people, assembled at the same hour, and falling prostrate before Almighty God ; imploring forgiveness of their sins, deprecating the judgements they have deserved, forming resolutions of future amendment, and soliciting the restoration and continuance of general peace and prosperity. The Father of mercies must needs look with an eye of compassion upon his children thus humbled before him ; and, for the sake of that Redeemer who died to obtain their pardon, and continually intercedes in their behalf, afford them the tenderest tokens of his returning love.

Our enemies profess also to be impressed with the same sentiments, and are not unmindful of practising the same duties. The more they are in earnest, the more must their hearts be softened, and the horrors of war alleviated : the more must they be disposed to forget former animosities, and rush into the arms that are open to receive them : the more will they be ashamed

of having entered into an unnatural and unsafe alliance, in order to extort absurd, impracticable concessions; and the more readiness will they shew to accept, with gratitude, the reasonable, the unexceptionable proposals which have been made them for lasting re-union and peace.

BUT the conduct of others is not our immediate concern. *To their own master they stand or fall.* Our duty is plain and obvious. Personal amendment must be the beginning of general reformation. It is our interest, by anticipating the severe lessons of adversity, *to know the things which belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes,* and to cultivate in our breasts, *the Fear of God,* as the great principle of our conduct.

CONSIDERABLE as the temporary objects may seem, which necessarily engage much of our attention, and are too apt to engage it entirely; the most important circumstance of our situation here is its being a state of trial and probation. We are placed in it, that we may cultivate our moral nature, give proper evidence of our having improved or neglected it, and then be removed to a place of eternal retribution. Our whole
interest

interest is in the hands of a Supreme Being, our Almighty Creator, our continual Preserver, and our equitable Judge; who has farther shewn himself, by *many infallible proofs*, to be also our gracious Redeemer. It is then the voice of common Sense as well as Religion, to all who are capable of listening to either, that we should make that choice, and pursue that conduct, which is most adapted to our situation, and we can best justify to ourselves. A reverential awe of God should be uppermost in our minds; for to him our relation is most intimate; and we shall violate no other duty, if we are steadily attentive to that. To him we are ultimately accountable for our behaviour; and he will assist our sincere endeavours to do our duty, supply our real deficiencies, and forgive our pardonable infirmities.

We are called then to no romantic heights of imaginary, unattainable perfection. It is only recommended to our consideration, whether it be not reasonable to bestow some thought, some attention upon these great concerns, when so much is bestowed without scruple, upon the superfluous accommodations of this
transitory

transitory scene. We may soon be convinced, that profligate principles, abandoned morals, violated faith, ruined health, and squandered fortunes, can neither be private nor public blessings; and if this conviction should gradually be so strengthened as to produce in their stead rational piety, unshaken integrity, unsullied honour, prudent œconomy, and virtuous self-government, would the interests of society suffer, or its internal welfare be neglected? Nor would its resources against foreign dangers be at all impaired. The earth, indeed, would not be deluged with blood upon trivial occasions. The glory of princes, and the honour of nations would not be thought sufficient causes for havoc and devastation. None but unavoidable wars would be undertaken, and these be conducted with calm intrepidity, imbibited with no unnecessary animosities, and terminated upon equitable conditions. The *Fear of God* then, since these are its genuine fruits, since it is incompatible with any other fear, and the source of manly, determined courage, is not an abject, monastic quality, fitted only for the cloister or the closet; but may be safely encouraged, and implicitly trusted for the regulation of active and public life.

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To *honour the King*, or, in the more general language of Saint Paul, *the higher powers* in every community, is the other duty prescribed in the text ; which, though it has been strained to a height too justly complained of, is yet both reasonable and necessary.

WE were, undoubtedly, formed by Nature, that is, by the God of Nature, to be social beings. The gradual multiplication of the species was attended, immediately, with the formation of families, and, remotely, of larger societies. The relations, not only of husbands and wives, of parents and children, but of masters also and servants, of governors and governed, have followed universally and necessarily. The connections, both of civil and domestic life, derive then their origin from the will of God : in this respect they stand precisely upon the same foundation ; and the duties arising from them are equally pointed out by the dictates of common Sense, and the clear voice of Reason.

BUT the apostles of Christ have superadded the directions and the sanctions of revelation. Their language is, WIVES, *submit yourselves unto your own Husbands,*

bands, as unto the Lord. (Eph. v. 22.) CHILDREN, obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Eph. vi. 1.) SERVANTS, be obedient to them that are your masters—as unto Christ—with good-will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not to men. (Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7.) Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the KING, as supreme, or unto GOVERNORS, as unto them that are sent by him—for so is the will of God. (1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15.)

IN all these passages, and in more that might be cited to the same purpose, the rights of husbands, of parents, and of masters, are enforced by the same divine sanctions with those of sovereigns. They are all equally referred to the Will of God; and we are told, that what is done from a regard to these rights, God will reward as if done immediately to himself.

Now, to say nothing of the other cases, the state of the servants mentioned by the Apostles, was that of domestic servitude for life; the most complete and absolute species of what we call slavery. It has not, however, been the practice to infer from hence, that

domestic slavery is enjoined by God, or that it is preferred by him to any other form of œconomics : on the contrary, wherever slavery, whether domestic or prædial, has been abolished or mitigated, it is to Christianity and its ministers that so salutary an effect is to be uniformly attributed. Let it not then be supposed, that true religion has any tendency to increase the number of slaves or tyrants ; and to enable the least, and too often the wickedest, part of mankind to oppress and prey upon the largest and the best.

THE truth is, that a religion of virtue and moral rectitude is far from debasing the nature of man. On the contrary, it inspires that magnanimity and generous independence, which has all the good qualities of the prouder virtues of the ancient philosophers and heroes, only more corrected and refined by mercy and humanity.

THE exhortations that are given to servants, to be dutiful and obedient, give, therefore, no right to masters to be brutal and inhuman. Nor does it follow, that because some of the Christians in *Asia* were in domestic servitude for life, therefore, a servant, hired

only for a limited time and upon a special and express compact, ought to be exactly in the same state with those to whom St. Peter and St. Paul wrote.

THE observation is applicable to all the other relations which have been mentioned. And in reality we find, that the apostles did not design to make any alterations in political or personal rights, or to change, in any degree, the customary state of men in civil society. Above all, they did not mean to make the condition of their converts more abject than it was before. The duties of HUSBANDS, of PARENTS, and of MASTERS, are equally inculcated with those of WIVES, of CHILDREN, and of SERVANTS. (*Eph.* v. 25. 28, 29. *Eph.* vi. 4. *Eph.* vi. 9. 1 *Pet.* i. 3. 7.) We know then, with certainty, that the apostles did not intend to establish any arbitrary and tyrannical notions, with regard to domestic government: and it would be perverse to suspect them of any such design with regard to civil government.

IT is true, they are silent with respect to the duty of SOVEREIGNS; except that it is urged as a reason for submission,

submission, that *Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.* (Rom. xiii. 3.) The reason is, that they meddled only with individuals, not with political bodies. Our Saviour had declared that *his kingdom was not of this world*; and his apostles, leaving the kingdoms of this world to themselves, addressed their precepts only to those who professed themselves the disciples and followers of Christ; none of whom at that time appear to have been princes.

WE see then, that divine right is not confined to civil government, much less to any particular form of it. It is extended equally to domestic œconomy; and in that, not only to the natural relations of marriage and blood, but also to the artificial connexion of MASTER and SERVANT, as well as of PRINCE and PEOPLE.

IT is indisputably true, that governments, reasonably and justly administered, especially under fixed and equal laws, do really derive their origin from the will of God: but the divine right, with which they are invested, is far from involving the absurd consequences

which too many have deduced from it. It implies no restraint upon subjects from endeavouring, by all prudent and justifiable means, by all remedies which are not worse than the disease, to recover their liberty, if lost or impaired ; or to improve and extend it, if possessed imperfectly and precariously. It implies no right in governors to commit injustice or wickedness of any kind. It gives them no commission to lay waste the earth with wilful mischief, to trample upon the reasonable privileges of human nature, or to arrogate to themselves that implicit submission, which is due only to the unerring wisdom, the impartial justice, and the perfect goodness of God.

BUT neither, on the other hand, are subjects warranted in setting themselves in array against government, though it should not in every thing come up to their ideas of perfection. Being administered by moral agency, it must necessarily partake of the nature of moral agents, from whom we expect not absolute perfection, though we entertain no doubt of their being created and ordained of God. The existence of even positive evil does not weaken this conclusion : for the

world abounds with evil (at least, according to our apprehensions of it) both natural and moral. The world, however, is still acknowledged to have been made by God : and the acknowledgment should of course be extended from the natural order of things, to the political administration of governments. The latter cannot be expected to be entirely free from evil ; nor should the behaviour of their subjects be such, as can scarce be justified even by that absurd supposition. For what reasonable apology can be made for the conduct of those who are busy to invent imaginary, and to inflame real grievances : who would make their governors responsible for difficulties, which arise from unavoidable accidents, or have perhaps been occasioned by their own selfish projects : who can revile their superiors without truth, and without probability : who can exert their utmost efforts to destroy the just balance of a well-poised constitution, by throwing an undue weight into the democratical scale : who scruple not to set in motion that unwieldy and dangerous machine, an enraged rabble, and precipitate it upon an adverse party, at the hazard of its falling upon legal authority and just government, in whatever hands they are lodged? This is dissolving
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the very bonds of society, to introduce *confusion, and every evil work* : it is losing sight of the very end of our coming together in civil communities ; which, to use the Apostle's words, could be no other, than that *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

UPON the whole, the inhabitants of the earth are the creatures of God, who superintends their conduct, and wills their happiness : all the relations, whether immediate or remote, which are necessary to their preservation, or conducive to their welfare, are, in effect, of his appointment ; and the duties resulting from them, are enforced by his sanctions. Sovereigns then have a divine right to obedience ; and subjects have the same right to protection. The remedies which are to be applied in this world, when these rights are deliberately violated on either side, must be left to the laws of every community, or to the urgent necessity of the case, but are not the proper subject of any religious precept. It should only be observed, that no such evils could exist, nor any such remedies be wanted, if the *fear of God* were adopted as the ruling principle of action : for then
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the performance of every duty, both social and personal, would be effectually secured.

It is to impress our minds with these salutary truths, to rouse our dormant sense of religion, that this national solemnity is appointed. Invectives on our enemies, or panegyrics on ourselves, are not its proper employment. We appear in the more immediate presence of Almighty God, to compose our angry passions, not to inflame them; to moderate our self-partiality, not to dwell on our real or imaginary virtues. Such a frame of mind would ill become the condition of petitioners for pardon and mercy; nor would it indicate any serious purposes of amendment. Our present duty, and the reward we may expect from it, are pointed out in a different strain by St. Peter; *humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* (1 Pet. v. 6.)

F I N I S.

the performance of every duty both social and personal, would be effectually secured.

It is to impart our minds with these liberal truths, to raise our domestic sense of religion, that this national solemnity is appointed. Instructors on our enemies, or panegyrics on ourselves, are not the proper employment. We appear in the more immediate presence of Almighty God, to combat our easy passions, not to inflame them; to moderate our self-partiality, not to dwell on our real or imaginary virtues. Such a flame of mind would ill become the occasion of petitioners for pardon and mercy; it indicates any vicious purposes of an ambitious present duty, and the reward we may expect from it, and points out in a different strain by St. Peter; humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. (1 Pet. v. 6.)



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S E R M O N *Hand. H.*
PREACHED AT
CHRIST-CHURCH, DUBLIN,
On the 9th of JULY, 1780,
BEFORE THE
INCORPORATED SOCIETY
in DUBLIN,
For Promoting
- ENGLISH PROTESTANT SCHOOLS
in IRELAND.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
JAMES, Lord Bishop of RAPHOE *Hawkins*

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY.
Together with an Abstract and Continuation of the SOCIETY's ACCOUNTS
and PROCEEDINGS, to the 1st of November, 1780.



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